

5. How many shops would you have opened?—I should only open a few, taking, as I say, only the towns that have a hundred thousand inhabitants.

6. How many shops would you open?—Six or eight, extending to possibly a dozen, as we found the trade warranted it.

7. Well, take a city like Manchester. You say that Manchester is one of the cities that do not use New Zealand mutton now?—I have had experience of Manchester.

8. Take any one of the cities, and say you open one shop in that city: do you think that is going to benefit New Zealand mutton to any extent?—I certainly do. I know that from my own experience.

9. Do you not think it would affect the wholesale handling of our meat if we retailed it?—It would aid it.

10. But would not the fact of the Government going into competition with the butchers affect our trade?—The suggestion is merely to advertise our meat, making a specialty of it, and appealing to a better class of people.

11. It is also a means of cutting into their trade, as they call it?—No; I would keep the price so high that we should encourage them to sell it.

12. But you would become competitors all the same, no matter what the price was?—We should at the start; but our object is not to compete, but to introduce our meat to their customers, so that they would be compelled to stock it.

13. You would make a display for twelve months and then close the shops: is that your object? If you were going to extend the shops, you would have by-and-by the New Zealand shops selling all the meat that has come from New Zealand?—I only suggest one large shop in each town of a hundred thousand inhabitants. I do not suggest opening shops for the purpose of trading in the general acceptance of the term.

14. If you opened one shop do you not think that the ultimate effect of opening that shop, if it succeeded, would be to entice you to open another?—Certainly not. Our object would be to induce existing butchers to stock our meat or to open shops for the sale of it. We merely desire to create a special demand for our meat which the butcher will have to supply.

15. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Do you think that the c.i.f. purchasers who operate in New Zealand compete so strongly with each other that the New Zealand grower, as well as the freezing companies in New Zealand, are getting as high a price as the position of the meat trade in England admits of?—I scarcely follow you as to the connection this has with the shops.

16. Do you think there has hitherto been healthy competition as between the London c.i.f. purchasers who buy out here sufficient to secure for the grower in New Zealand as high a price as the state of the trade in England can afford?—The prices they have been giving recently have been very satisfactory, and I do not think they enter into competition.

17. Would it not be much better to say "Yes" or "No"? I put my question as plainly as I possibly can—whether you consider the competition amongst the c.i.f. buyers for some time past to have been of such a healthy character that the New Zealand grower is getting wholesale as much for his meat as the state of the trade in England can afford?—He has for some time past.

18. Is any butcher free to go to Smithfield market and buy the meat he wants in the open market without let or hindrance of any sort?—Certainly.

19. There is perfectly free and open competition in the Smithfield market?—Yes.

20. Do you think that the retail price of that meat in the shops gives too great a profit to the butcher who buys in the Smithfield market?—No; I do not think it does.

21. You do not think that the retail butcher in England is making too much money at the expense of the grower here?—Not the butcher who is selling our meat honestly—not the butcher who is selling it as New Zealand meat.

22. But you think that his profit is not too high?—I think he makes a fair profit.

23. In that case, how are you going to improve the price to the grower here by establishing your own shops in England if the retail butcher is not making too much profit now?—The price that is being given to the New Zealand producer for some time past is most satisfactory, and I think, if that price could be guaranteed to continue, it would be unnecessary to do anything to improve the position. The present price is a good one, but it is better to have a good price all the year round than to have it high for one portion of the year and low for another. What I desire in asking that this proposal should be accepted is to insure a continuance of that good price, and to keep it steady.

24. Is the Committee to understand that the position of matters at the present moment is so good as to require no improvement?—I do not say it does not require any improvement. The price is so good at present that the trade is in a satisfactory state, and if we could continue it as it is now we should require to do nothing.

25. Well, can you not answer the question I have put in the affirmative or the negative—namely, Is the position at present such as requires no interference whatever on the part of the Government or any other person?—No, I do not say that it is. I suggest—and I am strongly of the opinion—that the Government ought to do everything to advertise our meat, and endeavour to get it into a channel of outlet distinct from that held by River Plate meat.

26. I thought you had already stated that the position was so satisfactory that if we could insure the continuance of it no interference would be necessary. Is that so?—That is so, if we could insure the continuance of it. I say I believe in advertising. I do not believe in any interference with the trade.

27. Having got so far, what do you fear in the future which would interfere with the present satisfactory position?—The increasing competition from the River Plate. We have good evidence that several new companies are starting in the Argentine, and the number of sheep known to be there is so large that I feel that in a very short time the export from that country will be much greater than it hitherto has been.